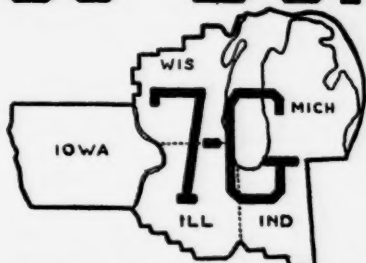


BUSINESS CONDITIONS

SEVENTH
FEDERAL



RESERVE
DISTRICT

Volume 7, No. 6

MONTHLY REVIEW PUBLISHED BY THE
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF CHICAGO

June 1, 1924

BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

FACTORY employment and production of basic commodities declined in April and there was a further recession in wholesale prices. Retail trade was larger than in March, chiefly because of Easter buying and was at about the level of earlier months of the year. There was a decrease in the volume of borrowing for commercial purposes and further easing of money rates.

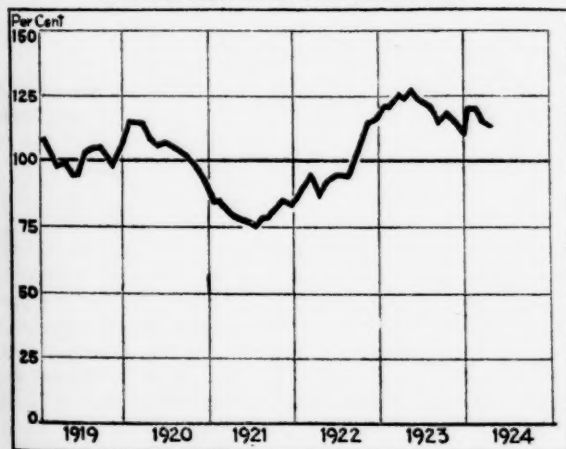
PRODUCTION—The Federal Reserve Board's index of production in basic industries, adjusted to allow for seasonal variations, declined two per cent in April. Declines were particularly large in the iron and steel, coal, and woolen industries. Mill consumption of cotton, on the other hand, showed less than the usual seasonal reduction between March and April. Factory employment declined two per cent in April, owing chiefly to large reduction of forces at textile and clothing establishments.

Contract awards for new buildings reached a higher value than in March and were larger than a year ago; value of building permits granted, however, declined and was smaller than in the corresponding month of 1923.

Department of Agriculture estimates on May 1 of the yield of winter wheat and rye are somewhat above the forecasts made in April. The acreage of winter wheat is estimated at 7 per cent less than last year.

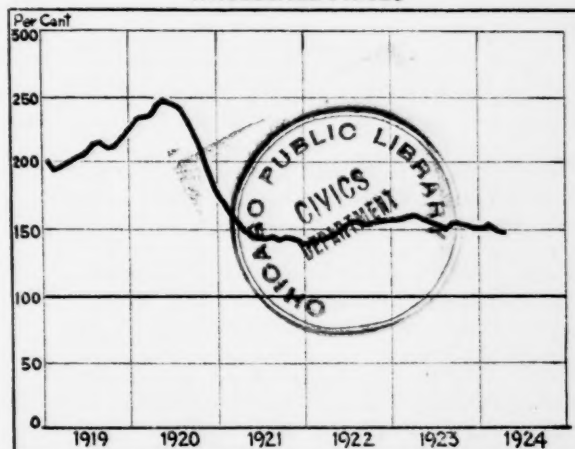
TRADE—Railroad shipments, which since the middle of March have been smaller than last year, were three per cent less in April than a year ago. Shipments of coal were much below last year, while loadings of merchandise and miscellaneous freight were higher. Wholesale trade in April was in about the same volume as during the preceding month and as in April, 1923. Sales of dry goods and hard-

PRODUCTION IN BASIC INDUSTRIES



Index of 22 basic commodities corrected for seasonal variation (1919=100). Latest figure April, 1924: 114.

WHOLESALE PRICES



Index of U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (1913=100, base adopted by the Bureau). Latest figure, April, 1924: 148.

Compiled May 27, 1924

ware were smaller than a year ago, while sales of drugs and shoes showed some increase. Department store sales were considerably larger in April than in March, partly owing to the unusually late Easter; total sales for the two months were two per cent greater than in the corresponding period of 1923. Merchandise stocks at department stores showed less than the usual seasonal increase in April, but were at a higher level than a year ago.

PRICES—Wholesales prices, according to the Bureau of Labor statistics index, declined one per cent during April and reached the lowest point since May, 1922. Farm products, however, advanced two per cent in April. Metals and foods showed substantial reductions; prices of clothing, fuel, and chemicals also declined; while prices of building materials and house furnishings remained unchanged. During the first half of May, quotations on cotton, wheat, flour, and hogs increased while prices of sugar, silk, wool, and metals declined.

BANK CREDIT—During the five-week period ending May 14, the volume of borrowing for commercial purposes

at member banks in leading cities declined somewhat from the high level reached early in April. There were increases, however, in loans on stocks and bonds and in investments in securities; so that the total of all loans and investments at the middle of May was higher than a month previous, and in larger volume than at any time in more than three years.

Volume of borrowing by member banks at Federal Reserve Banks declined further during the last week of April and in May, while holdings of securities bought in the open market increased slightly. Total earning assets declined to \$795,000,000 on May 21, the lowest since the autumn of 1917.

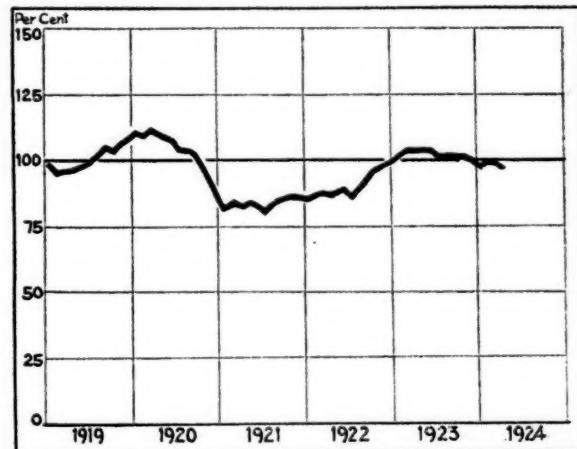
Further easing of money conditions during the last week of April and the first three weeks of May was reflected in a continued rise of the prices of government securities, in a reduction from $4\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{4}$ per cent in the rate for prime commercial paper, and a decline in the rate for bankers' acceptances from 4 to 3 per cent. On May 1 the discount rate of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York was reduced from $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 per cent.

RESERVE BANK CREDIT



Weekly figures for 12 Federal Reserve banks. Latest figures May 21, 1924: Total Earning Assets 795 million; Discounts 415 million; Acceptances and United States Securities 380 million.

FACTORY EMPLOYMENT



Index for 53 manufacturing industries (1919=100). Latest figure April, 1924: 97.

BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN THE SEVENTH RESERVE DISTRICT

APRIL business in the Middle West was featured by a general failure of industry to show the customary spring developments. Construction work, for months a leading factor in the district's maintenance of high activity, on the basis of contracts awarded and permits granted, showed a lower rate of increase over March than in previous years. In automobile production a slight recession appeared, and at iron and steel mills, definite contraction of operations followed the marked curtailment in orders. Coal output suffered a more than seasonal drop.

Mercantile activity varied, retail trade expanding, largely stimulated by the late Easter, wholesale trade appearing spotted, and freight carloadings continuing the downward trend noted in March. Collections likewise differ, with those from mining and farming districts, however, generally reported slow.

A smaller abandonment than usual of winter wheat land, but with a prospective crop below normal, is an outstanding feature of the agricultural situation. The increase in available farm labor is slight, and wage levels hold firm.

CREDIT AND BANKING CONDITIONS

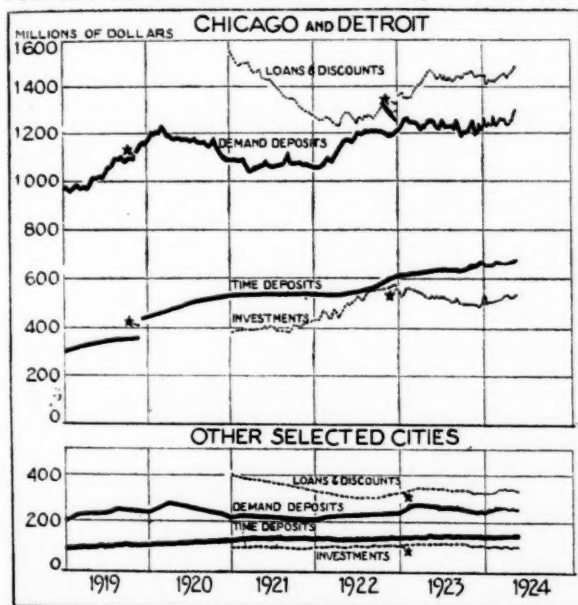
With the exception of small seasonal increases in requirements for certain lines, demand for banking accommodation for commercial and industrial purposes during the past month has been on a steadily decreasing scale, reflecting a general slowing down of business activity, and the majority of banks in the larger cities, particularly Chicago and Detroit, find themselves oversupplied with funds. Rates in Chicago, however, have not undergone any change, though a weakening tendency is discernible here and there. Collateral loans have ruled at 5 per cent, over-the-counter ac-

commodations ranging from 5 to 5½, and time loans passing at from 4½ to 5½ per cent. While generally speaking, conditions are good, there is a note of caution in the business world emanating from a number of causes, political and economic in nature.

In sections of the district where agriculture is the principal industry, almost no liquidation has taken place, and banks in numerous instances find themselves hard pressed for funds with which to carry the farmers, who have been prevented from marketing their corn on account of the bad roads during the winter and spring season and as a result require further assistance from the banks.

Loans to member banks by the Federal Reserve bank continue much below the volume shown on corresponding reporting dates a year ago. On May 21 these aggregated \$51,461,000, about half a million above the figure for the preceding week which was the lowest date of the year with the exception of March 19 when loans to members declined to \$48,507,000. Total earning assets are likewise below last year's volume, and on May 21 the figure of \$110,714,000 was the lowest since February 27. Federal Reserve notes in circulation dropped from \$294,041,000 on April 23 to \$275,477,000 on May 21, reflecting lessened requirements for currency, and the paying out of gold certificates instead of Federal Reserve notes.

POSITION REPORTING MEMBER BANKS, 7TH DISTRICT

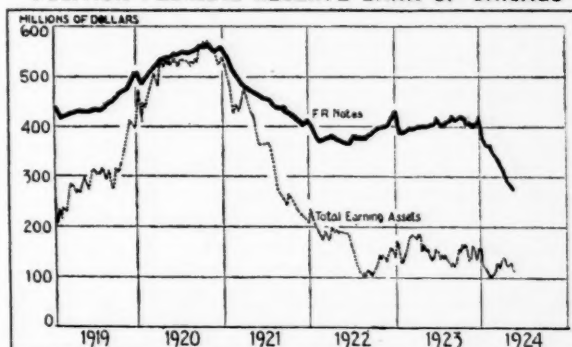


*Break in curve indicates data not comparable with preceding. Based on weekly reports to this bank by approximately 49 member banks in Chicago, 13 in Detroit, and 44 in other selected cities. Latest figures shown, May 14, 1924.

Loans and discounts of Chicago and Detroit reporting member banks moved upward throughout April and the first week of May followed by a slight downward movement on May 14, but the aggregate of "other selected cities" steadily declined with the exception of a small rise the second week of May. Investments of reporting members in Chicago and Detroit on May 14 were \$537,037,000, slightly above the previous high point of the year, \$536,-

013,000 on April 2. The trend has been generally upward throughout April, reflecting considerably augmented holdings of government securities though "other investments" have also shared in the upward movement. In other selected cities the volume of investments changed relatively little during April; the first and second weeks of May showed a slight increase. Demand deposits in Chicago and Detroit fluctuated sharply in April; on the thirtieth, however, a marked increase over the preceding week was shown, a rise continued on May 7 and 14 when the total of \$1,314,709,000 on the latter date registered a new high point. Time deposits in these cities have exhibited an increasing trend for months, more marked in Detroit since the first of April, however, than in Chicago, where declines were shown on two weekly reporting dates. The aggregate for the two cities on May 14 of \$677,207,000, marked the high point for 1923 and so far in 1924. In other selected cities time deposits have increased, though during recent weeks the movement has been more gradual than in Chicago and Detroit.

POSITION FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF CHICAGO



Latest figures shown May 21, 1924, in thousands of dollars: Federal Reserve Notes, 275,477; Total Earning Assets, 110,714.

Business Failures—Defaulting firms in the Seventh district in April decreased 0.4 per cent in number from March, but the aggregate of their liabilities exceeded the March total by 28.5 per cent. Compared with the corresponding month of 1923, April failures increased both in number and liabilities, the former by 26.9 per cent and the latter by 21.9 per cent. For the whole United States, decreases of 6.1 per cent in number and 49.9 per cent in liabilities were reported in comparison with March; a gain of 12.3 per cent was shown in number over April, 1923, while liabilities decreased 5 per cent.

Commercial Paper—Although above the level of a year ago, as was the case in February and March, April sales of commercial paper by ten dealers declined 32.6 per cent from the preceding month. This is a seasonal falling off slightly more extensive than in 1923 and considerably more so than in 1922 and 1921. Paper outstanding at the close of the month had contracted 2.0 per cent from that on March 31 and 18.9 per cent from 1923.

Dealers state that while rates during the month were steady, an easing tendency was shown toward the close. Some sales were made at 4½ per cent, the customary rates of all dealers being 4½@4¾ per cent, whereas in March 4¾ per cent was reported as customary by practically all dealers. Demand was moderately good, being fairly brisk

for the best paper, although where rates were unsatisfactory somewhat of a damper was placed upon buying. Demand was not very strong from country banks, which have been adversely affected by bad weather and road conditions. It is still somewhat difficult to obtain paper and the supply with the dealers remains moderate. Loans are not freely sought except by firms seasonally borrowing at this time of the year.

Open Bill Market—Five open bill market dealers in the district curtailed their acceptance activities considerably in the five weeks preceding May 14. Average weekly purchases were 32.3 per cent smaller than in the four-week period prior to the one under review. The largest decrease in buying was from purchasers other than acceptors. Aggregate sales were reduced 17.4 per cent, the decline being due to reduction in purchases by banks, although Federal Reserve bank buying, as well as that of other investors, was augmented considerably. Holdings at the end of the period were reduced about one-half from those on April 9.

Extensive declines in the rates of all maturities were made in this period. At the close bid rates for paper of 90-day and under were $3\frac{1}{8}$ @ $3\frac{5}{8}$ which compare with $4\frac{1}{8}$ @ $4\frac{1}{8}$ for April 9. Longer term eased from $4\frac{1}{8}$ @ $4\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{4}$ @ $3\frac{7}{8}$. Offered rates were similarly reduced.

The supply of paper was limited to some extent, while demand was fairly good, especially for bills of 90-day and less. Bills moved freely at the offered rates.

Acceptances—Considerable curtailment of activity in bankers' acceptances is evidenced by the April reports from eighteen accepting banks in the district which executed a volume of bills 33.4 per cent smaller than in March. In the past years these banks customarily showed a substantial increase in the corresponding comparison, but operations in general this year have deviated from the usual trends. Purchases of acceptances were augmented 30.0 per cent, while sales fell off almost half from the previous month, resulting in more than doubled holdings on April 30 as compared with March 31. Of these items, the volumes of acceptances executed and those sold were both more than 30 per cent under operations of a year ago, while purchases were 36.1 per cent above April, 1923, and month-end holdings increased to the largest amount since March, 1923. The liability of these banks on their acceptances outstanding at the close of the month was \$29,849,321, a decline of 9.3 per cent from March, but an increase of 43.2 per cent in the year-to-year comparison. Month-end holdings of the banks' own acceptances showed considerable gains in both comparisons.

Purchases of acceptances by the Federal Reserve bank amounted to \$10,680,791, which was the smallest amount since November, 1921, and a decline of nearly 8 million from those of the preceding month. Month-end holdings were the lowest since January, 1923, the volume having receded 11 million from the March 31 level. Sales during the month amounted to \$70,788.

AGRICULTURAL FINANCING

Increases over March 31 in the aggregate of loans outstanding of twenty-two Joint Stock Land banks and four Federal Land banks operating in the five states including the Seventh district, were shown on April 30. Loans of

Joint Stock Land banks totaling \$154,997,216 increased approximately two million dollars, and the Federal Land banks with \$136,792,440 gained nearly two and one-half million. Four Intermediate Credit banks operating in the same territory showed a reduction from March 31 in the total of loans outstanding of nearly sixty thousand, the total April 30 being \$677,010.

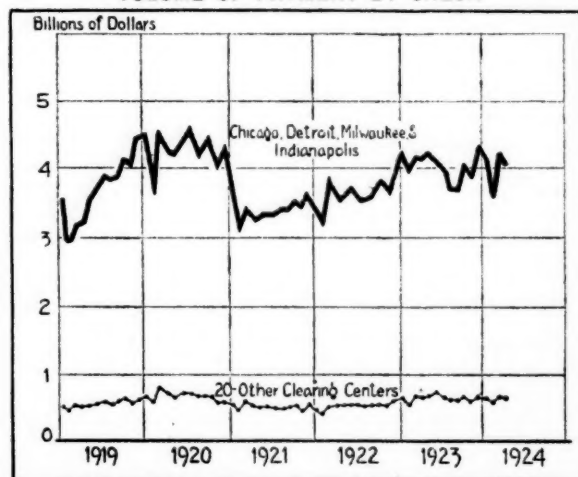
A consolidated statement of condition of the twelve Federal Intermediate Credit banks in the United States as at the close of business April 30, 1924, showed an aggregate of \$29,654,425.85 in direct loans and \$18,211,367.28 in rediscounts. Government bonds and securities held by the twelve banks totaled \$5,451,437.50, and capital stock subscriptions callable from the United States Treasury were shown on the statement as \$38,000,000.00. On the liability side, capital stock subscribed was given as \$60,000,000.00, surplus \$152,271.20, undivided profits \$329,258.67, and Federal Intermediate Credit Bank Debentures outstanding \$33,600,000.00.

VOLUME OF PAYMENT BY CHECK

Volume of payment by check in April as reflected by reports of debits to individual accounts received from twenty-four clearing house centers in the district showed declines from March, as well as from April, 1923. In the four largest cities of the district, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis, the shrinkage from March was 3.5 per cent, and 2.2 from the corresponding month of 1923. The total volume in twenty smaller reporting centers declined 2.2 and 0.6 per cent from the preceding month and April, 1923, respectively, while the April decline in the aggregate of the twenty-four cities was 3.4 from March, and 2.0 from April, 1923.

	AGGREGATE APRIL, 1924 (000 OMITTED)	PERCENTAGE CHANGES FROM MARCH, 1924	PERCENTAGE CHANGES FROM APRIL, 1923
Chicago	\$2,934,174	-3.6	-3.9
Detroit	713,110	-2.6	+6.0
Milwaukee	259,937	-5.8	-3.6
Indianapolis	145,636	-3.6	-1.8
Total	\$4,052,857	-3.5	-2.2
Total 20 cities	\$ 648,059	-2.2	-0.6
Total 24 cities	\$4,700,916	-3.4	-2.0

VOLUME OF PAYMENT BY CHECK



Checks Drawn on Clearing House Banks, 7th District. Figures used are estimates for calendar months based on weekly reports to this bank. Latest figures shown, April, 1924, in thousands of dollars: Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis, 4,052,857; 20 Other Clearing House Centers, 648,059.

SAVINGS ACCOUNTS AND DEPOSITS

The decline of 0.3 per cent in the amount of savings deposits from April 1 to May 1, as reported by 206 banks in this district, marked a reversal of the upward trend which had been in evidence the two preceding months. The decrease was a reflection of the declines of 0.9 and 0.5 per cent in Illinois and Iowa, respectively, as the other three states showed increases of 0.2 per cent in Michigan, 0.4 per cent in Wisconsin, and 1.0 per cent in Indiana. All of the five states continued to show increases over a year ago, the aggregate gain amounting to 6.8 per cent; the largest growth was in Michigan where an average increase of 11.4 per cent was reported. Comparison with the 1920 average showed a district increase of 20.7 per cent, Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa showing the greatest gains.

In contrast with the decline in the amount of savings deposits, between April 1 and May 1, there was a gain of 0.1 per cent in the number of savings accounts; Illinois and Iowa, however, showed declines of 0.2 and 0.4 per cent, respectively, while gains were reported for the other three states. There was an increase of 0.7 per cent in the aggregate number of accounts reported for the district on

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND CONDITIONS

Direct reports from 136 county agents representing 188,254 farmers show that in the Seventh district approximately the same acreage is being planted to corn this spring as in 1923. Wheat seeded last fall is in fairly good condition save in counties in central Illinois and Indiana where the crop suffered some damage from insufficient snow protection during the closing months of the winter. County agents report not only a smaller crop of pigs this spring than in the corresponding season last year but also fewer marketable hogs on farms than a year ago. The available supply of farm hands has increased only slightly and wages are holding firm, the wage trend in thirty-one counties being even higher than in the early part of 1923; rates have been revised downward in fifteen counties where the supply of laborers is slightly greater than the demand.

Despite a smaller abandonment of winter wheat land this spring than usual, the acreage remaining for harvest is below normal. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics on May 1 estimated a total production of 84,519,000 bushels of winter wheat for the five states lying largely within the Seventh district; which compares with 126,008,000 bushels, the final estimate for 1923. A total production of 553,013,000 bushels of winter wheat and 61,739,000 bushels of rye is forecast for the United States compared with 572,340,000 and 63,023,000 bushels, respectively, harvested in 1923. Stocks of hay are reported as slightly less than a year ago.

FLOUR

The flour industry manifested a seasonal decline in activity during April compared with the preceding month, according to figures reported by thirty-eight mills in this district. These operated at an average of 49.0 per cent of capacity compared with 53.3 per cent in March and 41.3 per cent the same month a year ago. Aggregate production during April showed a decline of 8.0 per cent from the March level, wheat flour and other flour decreasing

May 1 compared with a year ago, but comparison with the 1920 average showed a decline of 2.5 per cent.

Included in this compilation are the last figures reported by one Illinois bank and by three Iowa banks which were closed before May 1.

BONDS AND INVESTMENTS

The investment market during April was characterized by uncertainty, with no definite trend. Easing in money rates, however, produced a moderate demand the early part of May, and new offerings were well taken. Depression in the stock market has had a tendency to divert funds from stocks into short-term note issues. Government securities have been strong on account of many business firms placing money not needed for immediate use in their business in this form of security rather than in the bank.

Public utilities and rails are meeting with good demand; municipals were rather sluggish until the second week in May when an improved demand became apparent with a firming-up of the market; and high-grade real estate bonds have had a ready sale. Foreign bonds strengthened with the generally favorable reception of the Dawes plan.

6.3 and 24.9 per cent, respectively. Compared with April, 1923, total output increased 23.4 per cent, wheat flour showing an increase of 31.9 per cent, while flour other than wheat declined 30.7 per cent.

Stocks of both flour and wheat held at the mills decreased during April, the former 15.1 per cent and the latter 9.0 per cent, but compared with a year ago stocks of flour declined 17.4 per cent, while wheat showed little change.

Sales of flour during the month were 7.1 per cent smaller in volume and 5.5 per cent less in value than during March, but compared with April, 1923, sales increased 19.7 per cent in volume while little change in value was shown.

Receipts and shipments of flour from Chicago, according to figures furnished by the Chicago Board of Trade, also reflect the declining activity in the industry. Receipts during the month amounted to 900,000 barrels compared with 972,000 barrels in March and 1,102,000 barrels the same month last year. Shipments of flour from Chicago aggregated 569,000 barrels compared with 703,000 barrels in the preceding month and 915,000 barrels during April, 1923.

GRAIN MARKETING

Domestic demand has been light and receipts of grain from the country limited. The decline in grain movement from the farms is customary at this time and is usually followed by increased marketings after the close of the spring planting season. Grain receipts were greater at interior primary markets in April, 1924, than in the corresponding month of either 1921 or 1922, but fell below the level of a year ago and of the preceding month. More wheat and oats were forwarded from interior primary centers in April than in either the preceding month or the corresponding period last year. Prices became somewhat firmer as the month progressed but the average for April was less than in March. April transactions on the Chicago Board of Trade calling for future delivery were con-

siderably less in total volume than in March but increased slightly over February.

Foreign demand continues about on the same level as in previous months with a large portion of European requirements being supplied by countries other than the United States. Exports of oats, barley, and corn declined in April compared with March, but those of wheat and rye increased.

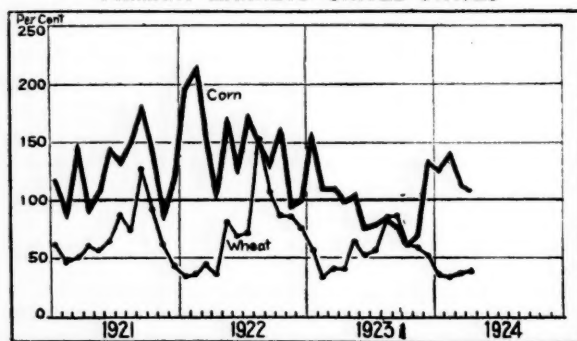
Visible wheat supplies in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom were 219,403,000 bushels on May 10, 1924, compared with 252,317,000 bushels on April 12, 1924, and 156,704,000 on May 12, 1923.

VISIBLE SUPPLY OF GRAIN IN THE UNITED STATES

Stocks in private and public warehouses, at principal points of accumulation, at lake and seaboard points, and in transit by water in the United States. Figures supplied by the Chicago Board of Trade.

	(In thousands of bushels)				
	WHEAT	CORN	OATS	RYE	BARLEY
May 17, 1924					
Warehouses and Afloat.....	46,744	15,466	8,903	19,788	912
Bonded	12,816		1,913	685	101
April 12, 1924					
Warehouses and Afloat.....	56,673	22,319	14,076	21,503	1,162
Bonded	5,985		1,206	1,115	200
May 19, 1923					
Warehouses and Afloat.....	37,110	12,393	16,167	17,997	1,809
Bonded	2,554		479	1,396	403

SHIPMENTS OF CORN AND WHEAT AT INTERIOR PRIMARY MARKETS—UNITED STATES



Latest figures shown April, 1924: Corn shipments, 107.0; and Wheat shipments, 39.0.

MEAT PACKING

The aggregate April sales in dollars reported by fifty-nine meat packing companies in the United States were 1.7 per cent less than in March and lowered 2.9 per cent from the corresponding period last year. Production remained at about the same rate as in the preceding month, although it receded toward the close of April as shown by employment figures, which declined 5.8 per cent in number, 7.4 per cent in hours worked, and 6.9 per cent in total payrolls in the period covered by the last pay-date in April compared with the corresponding period in March. May 1 inventories shrank slightly from the volume at the beginning of April, but lard holdings increased. Cold storage stocks exceeded the 1921-1923 five-year average for that date. Prices of veal and lard eased somewhat, and pork loins showed a strengthening tendency, but the wholesale prices of most other products deviated little from those prevailing at Chicago during March.

Although export conditions during May showed signs of betterment, the demand from both the Continent and the United Kingdom did not improve materially in April

over March. The total volume of meats and lard forwarded in April for export was less than in the preceding month; this was due partly to the exchange situation and partly to supplies in foreign markets being somewhat greater than needed for immediate consumption requirements. Prices on the Continent have been about on a parity with those in the United States, but in the English markets they have fallen below.

MOVEMENT OF LIVE STOCK

Fewer hogs and sheep and more cattle and calves were received at public stock yards in the United States during April than in March. Hog slaughter declined but that for cattle, calves, and sheep increased, in a comparison of April totals with those of the preceding month. The April receipts and slaughter of cattle, calves, and hogs were greater, while those of sheep and lambs showed smaller volume than the April average of the five years 1919-1923.

LIVE STOCK SLAUGHTER

	CATTLE	HOGS	SHEEP	CALVES
Yards in Seventh District				
April, 1924.....	217,183	918,821	194,964	171,344
Public Stock Yards in U. S.				
April, 1924.....	647,764	2,809,188	725,918	460,124
March, 1924.....	632,886	2,975,596	719,010	358,083
April, 1923.....	680,307	2,933,601	855,323	399,800

The movement of live stock back to feed lots on the farms gained in April over March, 1924, as well as over April last year, although the total for the four months ended April 30 was somewhat less than for the corresponding period in 1923.

AVERAGE PRICES OF LIVE STOCK

Per hundred pounds at Chicago

CLASS	WEEK ENDED MAY 10, 1924	APRIL 1924	MONTHS OF 1923 MARCH	APRIL 1923
Native Beef Steers (average).....	\$ 9.80	\$ 9.95	\$ 9.55	\$ 9.00
Fat Cows and Heifers.....	6.75	6.65	6.05	6.55
Canners and Cutters.....	3.25	3.20	3.20	3.60
Calves.....	8.50	8.95	9.50	8.40
Stockers and Feeders.....	7.65	7.00	6.80	7.10
Hogs (bulk of sales).....	7.45	7.40	7.35	8.10
Sheep.....	7.60	10.05	9.60	7.90
Yearling Sheep.....	12.10	13.10	12.50	12.00
Lambs.....	15.60	16.10	15.65	13.30

DAIRY PRODUCTS AND POULTRY

Seasonal expansion in output continued in the dairy product group during April. The production of creamery butter was 13.4 per cent greater than in March and 6.0 per cent above April a year ago, according to reports sent direct to this bank by representative creameries in the Seventh district. Statistics issued weekly by the American Association of Creamery Butter Manufacturers indicate a slightly greater output in the United States during April than in either March, 1924, or April, 1923. The April output of cheese by Wisconsin factories increased over the preceding month, but showed a small recession from a year ago. District sales of creamery butter gained 5.4 per cent over March and were 7.8 per cent in excess of those in April last year, according to statistics compiled from sales reports sent to this bank by representative firms.

April receipts of dairy products and poultry were larger at Chicago than those in either the preceding month or a year ago. In the United States, May 1 inventories of dairy products almost doubled the holdings on May 1, 1923, those of butter and eggs being slightly more than on April 1. Stocks of poultry were smaller than at the beginning of April and exceeded those on the corresponding date last year.

FUEL AND POWER PRODUCTION

COAL

Despite the continued dullness in the coal market, prices of bituminous coal remained practically stable from the middle of April to the middle of May, screenings from a number of fields being quoted by the Hopkins Daily Coal Reporter at an even higher level on May 14 than on April 16. This interruption of the downward trend of coal prices, however, was not a reflection of any improvement in demand, but rather of the marked curtailment in supply.

Illinois production during April amounted to only 3,812,000 tons, a smaller tonnage than has been mined in any month since the strike of 1922, and, with the exception of that year, less than the output for any April since 1916, while *Coal Age* reported over 100 mines of the 393 shipping units of the state permanently shut down and about the same number closed with indefinite plans for reopening. That similar conditions prevail in Indiana fields is evidenced by the fact that the percentage of time lost by miners in April because of a lack of orders was almost twice as large as in March. Lack of demand, coupled with the cessation of operations in the Southwestern states and in parts of Western Kentucky and Kanawha fields, reduced production in the entire country to less than 7,000,000 tons a week during April compared with a rate of over 11,000,000 tons the early part of 1924. The expansion in production during the first full week in May to a level slightly above the 7,000,000-ton mark, may be attributed in part to the resumption of operations in the Southwestern states.

The lake trade has been developing more slowly than last year, according to figures furnished by the Ore and Coal Exchange. Total loadings at Lake Erie ports for the 1924 season to the end of April amounted to 949,461 net tons, with vessel fuel aggregating 60,213 tons and cargo 889,248 tons; cumulative loadings in 1923 from the beginning of the lake season to the end of April totaled 1,152,549 tons, 1,105,074 tons of which were cargo, and 47,475 tons vessel fuel. Shipments to Lake Michigan ports during the first four months of 1924, amounting to 353,788 tons were 48,256 tons greater than in the same period in 1923, whereas distribution to Lake Superior ports during

the same intervals declined from 493,876 tons in 1923 to 341,228 tons in 1924.

With the exception of the week ended April 26 when two holidays caused a reduction in output to 1,205,000 tons, anthracite production in the latter part of April, including the week ended May 3, was maintained at a weekly rate of about 1,600,000 tons compared with more than 2,000,000 tons a week in the same period in 1923. The increase in output during the week ended May 10 to 1,924,000 tons was reported by the Geological Survey to be largely due to the settlement of local labor difficulties and to a more complete operation of mines where work had been hampered by floods. The increase in anthracite prices beginning May 1, caused chiefly by the curtailment of output during the preceding period, was followed by an improvement in demand.

ELECTRIC ENERGY

April declines in the activities of electric energy producers are seasonal for all items except industrial sales and plant capacity. The recession in industrial sales is significant in view of the fact that it is the first decline in April from March shown by the available data of this bank covering a period of six years. Operations in April, while on a larger scale than a year ago, were less markedly in advance of 1923 than in the other months of the year. The number of industrial users served by reporting companies in April was 0.2 per cent larger than in March and 5.8 per cent more than in April, 1923. The average increase of the first four months of this year over the corresponding period in 1923 was 6.0 per cent.

CHANGES IN APRIL, 1924, FROM PREVIOUS MONTHS

Compiled from direct reports to this bank from nine companies

	PER CENT CHANGE FROM		
	APRIL 1924	MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923
Plant capacity (K.W.).....	1,859,785	-0.1	+13.2
Plant output (K.W.H.).....	548,995,556	-9.4	+ 9.2
Plant output (daily average—K.W.H.).....	18,299,852	-6.4	+ 9.2
Peakload demand (K.W.).....	1,315,489	-9.4	+ 6.5
Industrial sales (K.W.H.).....	226,336,823	-2.9	+ 9.9
Industrial sales (working day average— K.W.H.).....	8,705,262	-2.9	+ 5.7
Ratio peakload demand to plant capacity.....	70.7	78.0	75.2
Load factor.....	58.0	56.1	56.5

INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

There was a noticeable lack during April of the usual acceleration of activity within the manufacturing industries of the district. The reports indicate a slowing down in practically all industrial lines, but the curtailments are not large and outdoor work is amply able to absorb an extra supply of labor at this time. The situation is in strong contrast to conditions of a year ago when manufacturers were having difficulty in obtaining the necessary labor for their requirements and when there was a strong tendency toward making wage increases.

The returns received by the Illinois State Department of Labor covering 300,000 industrial workers of that state, showed declines for April, amounting to 1.2 per cent in men and 1.0 per cent in earnings. For Wisconsin, as reported to its Industrial Commission by plants employing

83,000 men, the corresponding losses were 2.7 per cent and 4.3 per cent, respectively. In the states of Indiana, Iowa, and Michigan, reports sent directly to this bank indicate a somewhat heavier curtailment, the average loss for approximately 30,000 men amounting to 3.7 per cent. The combined figures for all of these states showed declines of 1.6 per cent in men and 2.3 per cent in the aggregate earnings.

Of the various industries represented in these returns, car construction furnishes the only noteworthy exception to the downward tendency. Stone, clay, and glass products also gained over the preceding month but the change was less pronounced. Metals and metal products as a whole showed a decrease of about one per cent in both employment and earnings. The heaviest declines were experienced in the clothing and the leather industries.

EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS — SEVENTH FEDERAL RESERVE DISTRICT

INDUSTRIAL GROUP	Number of wage earners week ended—			Total earnings week ended—		
	April 15	March 15	Per Cent Change	April 15	March 15	Per Cent Change
All groups (10).....	403,868	410,393	-1.6	\$9,879,195	\$10,113,645	-2.3
Metals and metal products (other than vehicles).....	166,645	168,303	-1.0	3,718,390	3,758,698	-1.1
Vehicles.....	45,065	43,130	+4.5	1,361,525	1,297,717	+4.9
Textiles and textile products.....	30,054	33,798	-11.1	647,808	790,995	-18.1
Food and related products.....	51,850	52,029	-0.3	1,296,597	1,342,101	-3.4
Stone, clay, and glass products.....	12,952	12,748	+1.6	379,120	367,060	+3.3
Lumber and its products.....	38,825	40,055	-3.1	905,377	938,812	-3.1
Chemical products.....	10,746	11,108	-3.3	273,373	282,273	-3.2
Leather products.....	16,228	17,201	-5.7	351,778	379,568	-7.3
Rubber products.....	2,481	2,624	-5.4	63,471	62,267	+1.9
Paper and printing.....	29,022	29,397	-1.3	881,756	894,154	-1.4

MANUFACTURING ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUT

AUTOMOBILE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

April statistics indicate a slight recession in automobile production in comparison with March, a decline which is contrary to the seasonal gains usually in evidence during the spring months. Compared also with April, 1923, total production declined, the first reversal since 1921 of the upward trend shown in year-to-year comparisons. Statistics received from identical manufacturers representing practically complete March production show 336,968 passenger cars produced during April, a loss of 3.2 per cent from March and 2.0 per cent from April, 1923. The output of trucks during April by manufacturers reporting a March output of 33,061 aggregated 34,977, a gain of 5.8 per cent over March and a loss of 4.9 from last year. During April, 1923, passenger cars produced increased 7.6 per cent over March, while truck production gained 8.0 per cent.

New automobiles and motorcycles actually sold at both wholesale and retail, which had been reported up to May 1, aggregated \$167,466,664 for the five states including the Seventh Federal Reserve district, a decrease of 6.3 per cent from the April 1 figure, and a gain of 82.3 per cent over May 1, 1923. Actual sales of automobile trucks and motor wagons amounted to \$18,308,488, a gain of 25.6 per cent over the preceding month, and of 58.6 per cent over the corresponding period last year. Actual sales of automobile parts and accessories aggregating \$17,625,533 increased 24.2 per cent over the preceding month and decreased 7.8 per cent from the corresponding month last year. These figures are not comparable with the April production or factory shipment figures.

With the April curtailment of production, and shipments smaller than in March, stocks of cars in dealers' hands and in warehouses were withdrawn in response to retail demand, which showed a marked improvement over March. Reports received by this bank from warehouses in Chicago indicate a fair movement of cars to consumers, but the number of cars still held is in excess of those held a year ago, although replacements have fallen off.

Distributors and dealers in the Middle West report gains in the wholesale and retail distribution of new cars during April compared with the preceding month and April a year ago, resulting in a smaller number of new cars on hand April 30 compared with March 31, although there was a gain compared with a year ago, at which time dealers were experiencing difficulties in receiving new stocks. Used car sales also increased compared with the previous month and year, while the number on hand April 30, decreased from March 31, but continued at a higher level than a

year ago. Used cars on hand April 30 represented 111 per cent of the total April sales of used cars.

DISTRIBUTION OF AUTOMOBILES

Changes in April, 1924, from previous months

	PER CENT CHANGE FROM MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923	COMPANIES INCLUDED MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923
Number of new cars sold				
Wholesale.....	+14.1	+23.2	43	37
Retail.....	+21.3	+1.8	74	59
Value of new cars sold				
Wholesale.....	+17.6	+16.1	43	37
Retail.....	+29.9	-1.1	74	59
New cars on hand at end of month				
Number.....	-21.4	+75.5	75	54
Value.....	-22.7	+43.2	75	54
Used cars sold during month	+28.7	+8.9	74	59
Salable used cars on hand at end of month				
Number.....	-6.5	+17.7	70	47
Value.....	-6.6	+8.7	70	47

Shipments of automobiles during April reported by the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce decreased in both carload volume and driveaways from March, 1924, and April, 1923, while shipments by boat increased seasonally over March, but were smaller than a year ago.

Passenger cars exported from the United States during March numbered 14,035, with a value of \$9,572,675 compared with 13,329 and \$9,527,171, respectively, in February. A year ago 11,811 were exported with a value of \$8,217,276. Exports of trucks also increased, totaling 2,329 in number and valued at \$1,607,518 compared with 1,704 and \$1,507,277, respectively, in February and 1,564 and \$1,046,075, respectively, in March a year ago.

CASTING FOUNDRIES

Contrasting with operations a year ago when marked declines from the preceding month were registered, production and shipments of reporting casting foundries in April rose above March, although the increases were distinctly smaller than those shown in the two preceding months. In comparison with April, 1923, however, production and shipments declined, but less extensively than in any other month in 1924.

The weighted average per cent of capacity at which twenty-four foundries reporting on the item operated in April was 77.0 per cent. While comparatively little difficulty is being encountered in collections, some foundries find them slow in Southern Illinois and Indiana.

CHANGES IN APRIL, 1924, FROM PREVIOUS MONTHS

Compiled from direct reports to this bank

	PER CENT CHANGE FROM MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923	COMPANIES INCLUDED MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923
Pig iron consumed.....	-4.5	+0.1	28	26
Iron scrap consumed.....	+9.4	-13.2	28	26
Steel scrap consumed.....	+8.5	-4.1	28	26
Total tonnage consumed.....	+5.3	-3.7	28	26
Castings shipped (tonnage).....	+1.9	-7.5	27	25
Castings shipped (dollars).....	+1.7	-3.8	27	27

STOVES AND FURNACES

Following the increases of February and March, shipments of stoves and furnaces in April were in lesser volume than in the preceding month, the seasonal decline being considerably smaller than in 1923. A lessened volume of orders continued the trend of the two preceding months. April showed a slightly smaller decline in production than did March.

Collection difficulties are being encountered by some of the companies chiefly in the mining and agricultural districts of the Middle West, and in the East.

CHANGES IN APRIL, 1924, FROM PREVIOUS MONTHS

Compiled from direct reports to this bank

	PER CENT CHANGE FROM		COMPANIES INCLUDED	
	MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923	MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923
Shipments	-7.4	+6.9	16	16
Orders accepted	-12.9	-2.3	12	12
Inventories	+6.9	+8.1	11	11
Operations (moulding room) ..	-2.2	+8.1	15	13

IRON AND STEEL

The unfavorable factors in the iron and steel trade observable in March became increasingly operative in April, reports on that month pointing to general weakness in the more significant indices of conditions in the industry.

Unsettlement of prices, because of frequent concessions by mills in need of new tonnages and willing to compete for them by price cutting, served as a deterrent to buyers, the majority of whom preferred to wait for steadier prices which they expected to crystallize at a lower level. Shipments during April continued in large volume which fact, combined with the slackness in new buying, served to reduce the volume on mill order books considerably. As a result, mill operations in practically all districts were considerably curtailed and at the close of the month the rate of production was about 20 per cent below the peak of March. Although the placing of future orders for steel was markedly light in April, immediate business, as in March, was in fair volume. There was practically no activity in the pig iron market and prices were readily cut by sellers in the attempt to obtain new business. Even with the concessions, however, orders were few and the tonnages small. Toward the close of the month, with prices still receding, some slight gain in inquiry was noticed but nothing much in the way of actual buying developed.

Reports from Chicago mills give evidence of much the same situation as has obtained throughout the country and recession in new business has been pronounced, although it cannot be said that order books underwent any serious depletion. Customers are drawing extensively on what stocks they have, and orders, as they come in, invariably call for prompt shipment. Some recession in steel prices in this district occurred during April, but on the whole fair strength was shown. Pig iron at Chicago declined twice, 50 cents near the middle, and the same at the close of the month.

Pig iron production in April was 3,233,428 tons, receding 6.7 per cent from March; on the daily average basis the falling off amounted to 3.6 per cent. In the Illinois and Indiana district the recession was practically the same as in the country as a whole. Production of steel ingots was at the daily average rate of 130,241 tons, a decline of 10.1 per cent from the record figure of March. Unfilled orders of the United States Steel Corporation declined 12.0

per cent from March, reaching the lowest point since February, 1922. The composite price of iron and steel products in April continued even more precipitately the decline of the preceding month and averaged the lowest since January, 1923. Scrap metal likewise coursed downward, in a number of instances declines of 20 per cent and more being recorded from the peak of this year reached near the close of February by most iron and steel scrap products.

Zinc—Production of slab zinc in April was 44,949 tons, the smallest since December, 1923, and a falling off of 5.9 per cent from that of March; shipments declined from 52,893 tons to 44,245 tons; while stocks were augmented 2.2 per cent. Zinc ores mined in the Joplin district aggregated 52,609 tons which compares with 84,594 tons in March. The average price declined from \$41.50 to \$39.52.

AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT

The upward trend, begun in February, continued in April, and agricultural machinery and equipment sales in that month reached the highest level attained so far in 1924, the total being slightly greater than in April, 1923. Exports were greater than a year ago. Production declined from March, the rate being 61.5 per cent of the theoretical normal for April. Twenty-four firms reported that dealers' stocks were moving into farmers' hands more rapidly than a month ago, but twenty-two of the companies found no improvement. Collections continued slow throughout the United States and especially so in the southwestern, central western, and northwestern parts of the country.

PRODUCTION AND SALES OF FARM EQUIPMENT IN THE U. S.

Changes in April, 1924, from previous months

	PER CENT CHANGE FROM		COMPANIES INCLUDED	
	MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923	MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923
Domestic sales	+1.8	-7.0	113	113
Sales billed for export	+32.5	+96.6	113	113
Total domestic and export sales	+7.3	+5.3	113	113
Production	-4.3	-11.6	104	104

Sales based on dollar amounts. Production computed from employment.

SHOE MANUFACTURING, TANNING, AND HIDES

Factory shipments of shoes during April exceeded production by 7.3 per cent, and as a result inventories were smaller on May 1 than at the beginning of the preceding month. The recession in production and shipments was seasonal, although the decline from March was less marked in 1924 than in either 1922 or 1923. Twenty-three of the companies reported unfilled orders sufficient for nearly six weeks' business, based on the rate maintained in April. Inventories reported for May 1 by twenty-seven companies were equivalent to 87.3 per cent of their April shipments. Collections especially in the cotton belt states continue slow.

CHANGES IN THE SHOE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY IN APRIL, 1924, COMPARED WITH PREVIOUS MONTHS

	PER CENT CHANGE FROM		COMPANIES INCLUDED	
	MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923	MARCH 1924	APRIL 1923
Production	-3.5	-6.0	35	35
Shipments	-4.5	+4.1	35	35
Inventories	-1.9	+5.4	33	33
Unfilled orders	-2.6	-27.2	34	34

District production of leather was indicated as lower in April than in either the preceding month or a year ago. Prices generally are unchanged from those a month ago, although calf leather is firmer.

Packer green hide markets showed greater activity with prices lower at Chicago during April than in March. Calf skins in greater amount were sold in April than in the preceding month but prices held firm. Sales of country hides have been limited owing to firm asking prices by dealers. The volume of green hides and skins shipped from Chicago was somewhat less in April than in March.

FURNITURE

Furniture manufacturing in this district slowed down during April, according to reports from seventeen firms which showed that operations averaged 76.7 per cent of capacity compared with 81.4 per cent in March.

According to figures reported by twenty firms, orders booked declined 37.2 per cent and shipments 20.8 per cent from the March level, and comparisons with a year ago showed decreases of 23.8 and 11.2 per cent, respectively. Unfilled orders, based on reports from eighteen manufacturers decreased 22.7 per cent during April, leaving about four weeks' business on hand at the end of the month; comparison with a year ago, according to figures for seventeen firms, showed a decline of 55.1 per cent. Collections were reported slow in some sections of the country.

BUILDING MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

April was a comparatively dull month in the lumber trade. Sales of twenty-nine wholesalers in the Seventh district were 10.9 per cent less than in the same month last year, although there was an increase of 8.7 per cent shown over March—a reflection of seasonal building activity. Orders received were for small amounts, and to cover immediate needs only, the majority of these coming from retail yards, flooring, and sash and door factories. Demand for hardwoods fell off considerably, owing to reduced operations in the automobile industry. There was also a contraction in orders from furniture manufacturers. The consequence of this dullness in trade was a general softening in prices, especially of softwoods; also, stocks remained stationary, and, if anything, were above those held last year.

Orders for common brick increased somewhat in Iowa, but demand for both brick and cement remained quiet at country points in that state during April, as farmers are buying very conservatively. Fuller operations were reported in the Illinois brick industry, while Chicago manufacturers were still having difficulty in keeping up with orders. Weather conditions which delayed drying were partly responsible for this situation. Cement production for the entire country continued to expand and shipments, although slightly less than in April, 1923, were 42 per cent greater than in March this year, and compared favorably with other years. There was a decrease of 5.8 per cent in April stocks of cement from the preceding month, but they are still at a very high point. There were no changes in the prices of either cement or common brick in this district during April.

Collections are slow in localities depending on the farmer trade, especially in the southern part of Iowa. The majority of the reporting firms in the above lines, however, state that collections are about the same as last year and term them satisfactory.

RAW WOOL AND FINISHED WOOLENS

The continued inactivity in the domestic wool market during the last month was reflected in further price declines. According to reports, the principal inquiry during the last few days of April was centered among the finer grades, but this interest was insufficient to strengthen prices for these grades. The fact that foreign markets remain strong has led to a continuation of the re-exporting of bonded wools abroad in some volume. Few purchases of the new clip were reported during April, dealers, for the most part, being unwilling to buy at the prices asked. As May approached, however, buying in Western primary markets became more general and sales of Utah wools, as well as of those from adjoining sections, were effected at 42 cents a pound in the grease.

Conditions in the woolen goods trade remain very unsatisfactory, with little activity either in men's wear or women's wear lines, the latter being affected not only by slow demand, but by labor difficulties as well.

CONTRACTS AND PERMITS

A gradual lessening in building activity was apparent during April in the Seventh Federal Reserve district. April is usually the seasonal peak month of the year and, although this year's figures conformed to this trend, yet the increases over the previous months were not so great as in other years. Contracts awarded in this district increased 10.2 per cent over March in comparison with 25.7 per cent in the corresponding period last year. They fell 11.5 per cent below April, 1923, and the figures for the first four months of the year were 1.3 per cent under those for the same period last year. Of the five states included in the district, Illinois alone showed a gain over last year in contracts awarded. Iowa showed the largest decrease, 46.2 per cent, but reported a decided increase over March of this year.

Statistics on prospective building revealed approximately the same trend as did actual contracts let. Permits issued by fifty cities in the Seventh district increased 15.6 per cent in estimated cost over March, but were 23.1 per cent less than those issued in April last year. Illinois figures, however, showed a decided falling off from a year ago, owing to the enormous volume of permits issued in Chicago in April, 1923. This city surpassed all others at that time in the increase of permits issued, the index number standing at 711.9. Indiana was the only state in which the estimated cost of April permits was less than in the preceding month, the result of generally lessened industrial activity in that state. Of the five large cities of the district, building expansion, as compared with last year, was greatest in Detroit, the value of permits issued there in April amounting to \$20,128,862, an increase of 68.8 per cent over April, 1923, and of 13.7 per cent over March this year. Des Moines, also, showed a noticeable gain over a year ago, but losses were reported for the other three cities. Although Chicago permits were much less in estimated cost than last year, the number of permits issued there was un-

usually large and increased 27.8 per cent over April, 1923.

The major portion of building activity during April was in residential construction. Contracts awarded for that purpose increased over both the preceding month and a

year ago. Of the total amount of permits issued in thirty-one cities of the district, 56.5 per cent were for residential building. Last year the ratio stood at 50.3. Permits were also issued for a considerable amount of public building.

MERCHANDISING CONDITIONS

WHOLESALE TRADE

April returns from reporting wholesalers in this district indicate varied conditions among the different commodity groups as well as among individual firms within each group. As compared with March, 1924, hardware reports present the only clearly defined trend, with April sales for all but two firms heavier than during the preceding month. Grocery firms are divided, twice as many registering increases as decreases, while drug and shoe dealers show a fairly even distribution. In dry goods, smaller April sales for the majority of firms resulted in an average decline, less marked than corresponding changes in the three preceding years, but only slightly offsetting the February-March decrease peculiar to this year.

Sales comparisons with April, 1923, also are mixed, the majority of drug and hardware firms showing more frequent gains, but for dry goods and groceries, declines predominating. Total sales for the first four months of 1924 are less than in 1923 for more than half the firms in each group except groceries.

Various stock trends likewise were apparent, grocery, drug, and shoe inventories generally lower on April 30 than a year ago, but dry goods and hardware both averaging 5 per cent increases. The last named group showed the only net gain over March 31, 1923—the result, however, of stocking up during the month by half the firms.

In collections percentage changes from a year ago range from 12 per cent decline for shoes to 6 per cent increase in drugs, while comparisons with March, 1924, show increases in the cases of all but eleven firms, which reported declines from the preceding month.

DEPARTMENT STORE TRADE

With two exceptions, April sales of department stores reporting to this bank exceeded the March volume of business. This expansion, reflecting the late Easter, compares with a similar increase in 1923, and, though less, corresponds to the March gains in 1921 and 1923, in both of which years Easter came early.

Eighty per cent of the firms reported increases also over April, 1923, amounting on a daily average basis, however, to only 5 per cent, the unseasonable weather this year tending to postpone the usual spring stimulus to trade. Cumulative sales for the first four months of 1924 are 7.3 per cent ahead of a year ago.

Collections for the same period average 45.0 per cent of accounts outstanding, as compared with 46.7 per cent, the 1923 ratio, and 43.6 per cent two years ago. For April alone, three-fourths of the stores reported heavier collections than a year ago or during March.

With net inventory changes during the month about evenly divided between decreases and increases, aggregate stocks on hand for the group remained practically unchanged from the March 31 level. Compared with April 30,

1923, however, stocks were generally larger this year, averaging for the district a gain of 11.1 per cent. A study of average sales during the first four months of 1924 with average stocks during the same period for forty-three firms shows twenty-five inventoried proportionately higher than in 1923, and twenty-three higher than in 1922. Outstanding orders continued the slightly downward trend apparent since January, the average for April being 7.1 per cent of purchases during 1923.

SPECIALTY STORE TRADE

Marked expansion during April in wearing apparel sales was apparent from reports made to this bank by women's specialty and men's clothing stores, all of which showed gains over the preceding month. Comparisons with a year ago also are favorable. In general, inventories were reduced during the month.

CHAIN STORE TRADE

Chain store sales during April vary in comparisons with the preceding month, half the systems reporting regularly to this bank showing increases over March, and half decreases. For the majority of firms, sales were larger than during the same month of previous years.

MAIL ORDER TRADE

April sales of Chicago's two largest mail order houses increased over March by 7.6 per cent, a contrast to the usual decreases at this time, and largely the result of Easter trading. Compared with the corresponding month in previous years, combined sales were 10.2 per cent ahead of last year, and 53.3 per cent and 48.1 per cent larger than in 1922 and 1921, respectively. The gain of 9.4 over 1920 is the first noted this year.

TRANSPORTATION

Curtailment in commercial activity, as shown by reports from industries generally accepted as indicators of current trends, is reflected in the course of freight carloadings. After advancing to a peak on March 1 for the first quarter of the year, traffic has since trended downward at practically the same rate at which it increased during the corresponding period of last year. An analysis, however, of the cumulative freight carloadings since January 1 indicates that this recession has not made the comparison unfavorable with traffic conditions of a year ago. During thirteen consecutive weeks of this year the cumulative volume of freight carloadings exceeded that of the same period of 1923, although this condition was slightly reversed with the addition of the report for the week ending May 3.

During the first quarter of 1924, orders were placed for 72,955 freight cars compared with 76,599 for the first quarter in 1923. The increased number of surplus cars, idle because of smaller carloadings, has brought about a reduction in railroad buying from the exceptionally large purchases made during February.

MONTHLY BUSINESS INDICES COMPUTED BY FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF CHICAGO

(Index numbers express a comparison of unit or dollar volume for the month indicated, using the monthly average for 1919 as a base, unless otherwise indicated. Where figures for latest month shown are partly estimated on basis of returns received to date, revisions will be given the following month. Data refer to the Seventh Federal Reserve district unless otherwise noted.)

	No. of April					No. of April			
	Firms	1924	1924	1923		Firms	1924	1924	1923
Meat Packing—(U. S.)—					Electric Energy—				
Sales (in dollars) ¹	63	85.7	87.2	86.8	Output of Plants (KWH)....	10	155.7	171.9	143.6
Casting Foundries—					Industrial Sales (KWH)....	10	172.5	177.6	158.2
Shipments (in dollars).....	29	97.5	96.9	101.5	Wholesale Trade—				
Stoves and Furnaces—					Net Sales (in dollars):				
Shipments (in dollars).....	19	89.4	97.0	86.4	Groceries	40	71.8	69.5	79.1
Agricultural Pumps—					Hardware	21	117.8	106.1	115.9
(U. S.)—					Shoes	7	70.5	58.1	59.1
Shipments (in dollars).....	20	99.6	103.2	100.0	Drugs	14	100.7	100.9	100.6
Agricultural Machinery & Equipment—(U. S.)²—					Dry Goods	13	82.7	89.1	84.2
Domestic Sales (in dollars) 131	114.6	112.6	123.9	125.7	Retail Trade (Department Stores)—				
Exports (in dollars).....	131	176.8	133.5	91.0	Net Sales (in dollars):				
Total Sales (in dollars).....	131	124.1	115.7	119.0	Chicago	9	138.7	127.3	118.0
Furniture³—					Detroit	4	163.9	137.5	150.1
Orders (in dollars).....	23	89.3	142.2	120.7	Des Moines	3	119.2	109.9	115.1
Shipments (in dollars).....	23	130.9	165.2	148.6	Indianapolis	4	163.8	136.4	138.5
Shoes⁴—					Milwaukee	5	127.5	142.0	133.0
Production (in pairs).....	36	146.8	152.1	158.6	Outside	40	118.0	96.9	107.5
Shipments (in pairs).....	36	153.1	160.3	152.5	Seventh District	65	145.9	123.2	132.5
Freight Carloadings—(U. S.)—					Retail Trade—(U. S.)—				
Grain and Grain Products....	96.6	104.7	96.7	103.6	Department Stores	333	132	115	119
Live Stock	89.7	92.4	94.4	92.0	Mail Order Houses.....	4	114	106	103
Coal	76.0	100.3	108.6	112.8	Chain Stores:				
Coke	120.8	145.2	171.5	166.5	Grocery	29	210	198	180
Forest Products	133.4	142.0	134.5	130.9	Drug	10	145	149	135
Ore	55.7	31.4	58.4	36.6	Shoe	6	178	118	125
Merchandise and					Five and Ten Cent.....	5	178	163	142
Miscellaneous	124.6	123.1	125.5	119.4	Music	4	93	99	99
Total	109.3	113.7	117.4	113.7	Candy	4	208	181	159
Iron and Steel—					Cigar	3	130	136	125
Pig Iron Production: ⁵					U. S. Primary Markets⁶—				
Illinois and Indiana.....	147.2	152.8	139.4	129.5	Grain Receipts:				
United States	128.6	133.4	141.1	135.7	Oats		73.2	86.0	85.8
Steel Ingot Production—(U. S.)³—					Corn		119.6	196.3	112.4
Unfilled Orders U. S. Steel Corp.	70.2	79.8	121.6	123.5	Wheat		32.9	55.2	69.3
Automobiles—(U. S.)—					Grain Shipments:				
Production:					Oats		80.2	78.0	87.1
Passenger Cars	243.9	252.1	248.9	231.3	Corn		107.0	112.3	98.3
Trucks	135.3	127.9	142.3	131.8	Wheat		39.0	37.8	40.3
Shipments:⁷					Flour Production—				
Carloads	236.1	260.2	220.3	215.0	(In barrels).....	42	93.4	101.5	75.3
Driveaways	93.3	105.9	154.1	160.5	Building Construction—				
Boat ⁸	119.6	14.6	148.2	56.3	Contracts awarded				
Sales (7th District)—					(in dollars):				
New Automobiles	166.0	177.1	91.0	133.6	Residential		182.0	169.2	177.4
New Automobile Trucks..	70.9	56.5	44.7	50.7	Total		121.1	109.9	136.9
Parts and Accessories....	74.9	60.3	81.2	69.9	Permits:				
Stamp Tax Collections⁹—					Chicago		343.9	300.7	269.0
Sales or Transfer of Capital Stock	140.8	148.2	333.1	351.3	Cost		385.7	307.6	711.9
Sales of Produce on Exchange—Futures					Indianapolis		339.8	245.9	283.6
	39.4	28.9	44.7	52.0	Cost		233.7	207.6	301.6
					Des Moines		305.9	202.0	259.8
					Cost		223.6	126.8	186.3
					Detroit		275.2	211.3	207.8
					Cost		291.0	256.0	172.5
					Milwaukee		224.6	165.6	216.8
					Cost		256.7	260.8	316.0
					Others (45)		310.4	179.7	289.7
					Cost		228.4	215.4	257.8
					Fifty Cities.....		288.2	198.5	232.2
					Cost		296.9	256.8	386.3

1. Monthly average 1920-1921=100; 2. Monthly average 1923=100; 3. Monthly average 1919-1920-1921=100; 4. Monthly average of mean of production and shipments in 1919=100; 5. Average daily production; 6. Monthly average 1920=100; 7. Base figures (1920) partly estimated; 8. First Illinois internal revenue district; 9. Monthly average receipts 1919=100.

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